

Social Questions

BULLETIN

of the Methodist Federation for Social Service (unofficial), an organization which rejects the method of the struggle for profit as the economic base for society; which seeks to replace it with social-economic planning in order to develop a society without class distinctions and privileges.

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Eliminate Discrimination

All through our war effort there runs another conflict, endangering our success, menacing our future. At the front, where bullets know no color line and bombs are unaware of religious differences, it seldom appears. In the training camps, the factories, the shipyards, the transportation lines, the discrimination of white man against Negro, and Christian against Jew, constantly assail the principles for which we fight. In legislative halls white supremacy and anti-Semitism begin to raise their fanatical cries. Unless these things can be eliminated there will be no durable peace, only more conflict.

DANGER AHEAD!

How easily this can come is shown by the anti-Negro violence that suddenly broke out in Detroit's largest park last June, spread through the city and continued for two days until Federal troops restored order. By that time 28 persons had been killed, 800 injured, 1300 arrested, and much property destroyed. Between April and June of that year lesser outbreaks against Negroes occurred in Mississippi, Alabama, California, Florida, Texas, Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Detroit, with its half million new workers, black and white, mostly from the South, was the climax of widespread antagonism. The year before there had been violence, incited by the Klan, against the occupation by Negroes of a public housing development built expressly for them.

Migration from the South to war jobs has brought signs in eating places all up the Pacific Coast "We Serve White Only." The white supremacy group in the deep South openly avow their purpose to put the Negro back in his place after the war, by force if necessary. Their answer to the Supreme Court decision in the Texas primary case, and to the possibility of anti-poll tax legislation is, the negro shall not vote anyway. Since the Klan now operates mostly in the North, a White Supremacy League is being promoted to nullify all laws which grant Negroes their constitutional rights. This is only a part of the possibilities of a situation like that which followed emancipation. This time however the division is not sectional. The white supremacy fanatics have their anti-semitic, anti-labor, anti-democracy allies in the North. They also have the New South to reckon with, speaking and acting, for example, through the Southern Conference for Human Welfare. Today it is not a question of whether the nation is to be the supreme authority. *The issue is—which is to control the nation, the lust for power or the democratic conscience?*

A new menace appears. In the Southwest tension grows between Americans of English and Mexican stock. In Los Angeles last year 17 Mexican boys were sent to

the penitentiary, some for life, as the result of a fight in which another Mexican was killed — the Sleepy Lagoon case. The prosecution was saturated with race prejudice. This form of it may be expected also to appear in the East if the wartime use of Mexican laborers on the railroads is continued. The recent community protest, and barn burning, in New Jersey, because of the use of a few relocated Japanese in farm work, is another sharp warning of the evil within us and the danger ahead.

Concerning our treatment of American-born Japanese the Attorney General asks: "Could anyone before the war have complacently accepted the proposition that the government move 75,000 citizens out of their homes and hold them with enemy aliens for relocation?" Supreme Court Justice Murphy says that this act bears "a melancholy resemblance to the treatment accorded the Jewish race in Germany and other parts of Europe." The Army officer who issued the order told a Congressional Committee in justification: "A Jap is only a Jap." Yet today the record of Japanese Americans at the front is as high as that of any other citizens. There was more behind this un-American procedure than the military mind and war jitters. Says a California pastor: "Except for these California agricultural and banking interests there would not have been any greater 'military necessity' here than in Hawaii, and we would not now have a Japanese problem." The advice of bank representatives on evacuation boards was "Sell everything for whatever you can get out of it." To what homes and businesses are these citizens to be restored? *This new running sore the war has opened in our body politic will not heal until full reparation is made.*

JIM CROW IN UNIFORM

The main discrimination against the Negro in our war effort is the Jim Crow policy of the Army and Navy. In the army, with few exceptions the Negro is placed in separate units or in labor battalions. In the Navy, Marines, and Coastguard, most of the training is segregated and possibilities of promotion are limited. No colored woman can enter the Waves, Spars, Marines or Waafs, only the Waacs. Our armed forces call monthly for 7000 graduate nurses. There are over 7000 Negro graduate nurses. Only 202 have been permitted to enter. Segregation is defended by the military authorities on the ground of precedent and "it is expedient and satisfactory to do so." The U. S. Circuit Court of Appeals of the New York District has ruled 2 to 1 that the practice of setting separate draft quotas for Negroes and whites does not constitute illegal discrimination.

Persistent efforts have broken through race barriers at some points. The army now has a few mixed officer

candidate schools, combat and hospital units, training units for technicians. It has recently graduated 24 Negro aerial navigators and formed a Negro paratroop unit. But opportunities are not nearly equal to the capacities shown by the record of the 99th Negro Fighter Squadron in Italy. It was because of persistence in organizing segregated air training centers against his strong disapproval that William H. Hastie, former Federal judge and law school dean, resigned as civilian aid to Secretary Stimson after serving two years. He declared that from the beginning the air force had not wanted negro personnel and said, "This attitude is the result of wholly unscientific notions that race somehow controls a man's capacity and aptitudes." He also charged that Negro aviation units were expanded without defining specific military duties for them so that odd jobs of common labor were the characteristic assignment.

At the beginning of the war a Negro in the Navy could only be a messman. At the Great Lakes Training Station 1500 a week are now being graduated for general duty, the top ranking men as petty officers. The training is segregated, but not certain recreational and cultural activities. Openings on combat vessels are limited at present to destroyer tenders, anti-sub craft and P. T. boats. 22 Negroes will soon be commissioned as officers, with segregated ships ready for them. The Maritime Training Schools for the Merchant Marine are on the basis of racial equality. There are now three merchant ships carrying war supplies with Negro skippers, mixed staffs and crews, all members of the National Maritime Union. They uniformly report harmonious relations and effective work. On one ship the Negro chief officer was stricken with a heart attack and had to be buried at sea. He was a lieutenant commander in the Naval Reserve but navy custom said he could not be called for duty. *The enlisted men in the naval gun crew on his vessel buried him with the full naval salute.*

From the camps come complaints that the Negro is often treated as a second class citizen. Rev. J. L. Horace, President of the Illinois Baptist Convention, surveyed for the Fraternal Council of Negro Churches ten camps in the South where Negroes are stationed. He reported to the War Department that: "The nearby civilian community, not the War Department, determines the way these men are treated. Policemen are cruel and revengeful and the Army permits them to take jurisdiction. Civilians treat colored soldiers as undesirable, causing many Negroes to take similar attitudes for fear of unpleasant reactions; so Negro soldiers often refuse to take leave and become embittered. It is difficult for Negro soldiers to get hospital treatment or adequate attention in clinics. One Negro battalion was trained for two years as artillery men, then made into a labor outfit.

Last February a Citizens' Committee of Springfield, Mass., charged that nearly 600 Negroes at Westover Field were segregated in the theatre and at chapel service, denied proper medical attention, and most of them assigned to menial duties. Some local commanders have shown an understanding of this problem and have attempted to meet it.

PREJUDICE AND PASSION

What the Army has to contend with was sharply shown when Chairman May of the House Military Affairs Committee attacked the proposed use in orienta-

tion courses of a pamphlet "Races of Mankind" which refuted Hitler's race theories. He erroneously charged that it represented the northern Negro as the intellectual superior of the Southern white. The pamphlet was withdrawn. The CIO, through its War Relief Committee, is sending it to its member list of more than 100,000 names in the armed forces.

More serious in long time consequences, because it lends itself to the perpetuation of unscientific race theories and the doctrine and practice of race superiority, is segregation in the blood bank. The scientific fact is that all possible tests, biological, physiological, chemical, microscopic, show that all blood is similar except for the four medical types which occur in the blood of all peoples. Experience clinches the matter. In all yellow fever areas our soldiers and sailors are protected by vaccination. The Rockefeller Foundation Report for '43 states that all yellow fever vaccine used since '37 is the result of an original strain obtained in '27 by its laboratories in a fever-ridden district of West Africa from a native named Asibi. Yet to white supremacy Congressmen the proposal to take the labels off the blood bank is "one of the schemes of these fellow travellers to try to mongrelize the nation." They say the same about the proposal of the U. S. Office of Education that outstanding Negro scholars be admitted to white colleges and universities in the South." *Nevertheless the Kentucky House of Representatives has just voted to authorize the teaching of whites and Negroes together in graduate and professional courses in that state.*

THE RIGHT TO WORK

The war has produced a serious effort to eliminate discrimination in employment. The Fair Employment Practices Committee was appointed by Executive Order of the President, June 26, '41. It reaffirmed the national policy of no discrimination because of race, creed, color or national origin, and declared it to be the duty of employers and labor organizations to provide for full and equitable participation of all workers in defense industries. Up to Dec. '43, the FEPC had handled more than 1700 cases monthly, of which 80% concerned Negroes, 6% Jews, and the rest mostly Spanish speaking Americans. WLB has helped out by ordering an end to discriminatory wages against Mexican, Indian and Negro workers in Arizona copper mines.

FEPC is now under heavy attack. Its orders have been defied by the Southern Railroads and Railway Union, also by five West Coast Shipbuilding Companies who say the Boiler Makers Union (AFL) determines their action. The Southern Railroads question the right of the Committee to function as a government agency and propose to take the issue to the courts. The matter was promptly taken up by the House Committee to Investigate Executive Agencies originated and chaired by poll-taxed and labor enemy Howard Smith. His team mates in the Senate then got through an amendment to the Independent Offices Appropriation Bill prohibiting the President from transferring funds to any Federal Agency that has been in existence twelve months or more without specific authorization from Congress. The aim is to end FEPC May 28 when its appropriation expires. There is legislation before the House to make FEPC a permanent agency.

Job discrimination cannot be ended without positive action by organized labor. At present a number of unions

discriminate against the Negro by provisions in the ritual or constitution or both, and by tacit consent. There was a long debate on this question at the AFL Convention last October, centered on the refusal of the Boiler Makers to change the auxiliary status of Negroes which gives them no share in the government of the union. In the end several resolutions calling for action against race discrimination were voted down and a committee report was adopted reaffirming previous declarations of principles and policy and stating that the Post-War Problems Committee had appointed a sub-committee to deal with this and other minority problems. The CIO at its Convention in November pledged itself to carry on the fight for protection in law and in fact of the rights of any racial, religious or minority group to participate fully in our social and political life. It then took action concerning several concrete situations and re-dedicated itself to *"continue with determination its efforts to eliminate completely the economic factors which are the fundamental causes of discrimination in its most vicious form."*

A National Urban League survey of the efficiency of the Negro in war industry gives hope for a wider field for them after the war. The handicap is discrimination against their promotion after they acquire the necessary skills. Also when unemployment comes they are the first let out. Local 252, United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers, CIO, Bridgeport, Conn., facing a lay off of 3000 workers, voted that it apply *equally to colored and white on the ratio of each group to the total personnel.*

SINS OF CHRISTIANS

Since the rise of Hitler, discrimination against Jews in hotels, resorts and jobs has grown into anti-Semitism, and anti-Semitism has moved from propaganda into action. In cities from coast to coast there has been defilement of synagogues and cemeteries. In Boston and New York there have been attacks on Jewish children and youth. A Chicago minister reports armed youngsters pursuing Jewish boys, a carefully prepared anti-semitic propaganda among the Negro population, anti-Semitism spreading in rural sections, an anti-semitic organization preparing to carry precincts in the election. Reports from other sections reveal the spread of anti-Semitism among school children and church women. As in the anti-Negro outbreak in Detroit, official and social worker investigations put the blame upon defective social environment and failure of law and order agencies. Case studies of the youth involved also reveal indoctrination from propaganda put out by anti-semitic organizations, some of whose leaders are on trial for conspiracy and others are still carrying on. The government expects to prove that anti-semitic and anti-Negro propaganda was fed these organizations by Goebel's foreign bureau. At the January anniversary of his regime the one crumb of comfort Hitler offered the German people was that God will later raise Nazi Germany to new heights of greatness and the world will yet accept the Nazi program as the only solution of the Jewish question.

Other factors which now lead propaganda-fed, underprivileged youth to acts of violence against Jews are the war psychology and emotional insecurity created by the war. Should this be increased by economic collapse in the post-war period more violent anti-Semitism will appear. Always in history anti-Semitism has provided a scapegoat for failing governments unable to meet the

peoples' needs and for peoples unable to find a way out of unendurable situations. Recently three-fourths of the House rose to cheer a vicious anti-semitic tirade by Rankin.

This menace has brought a large response from the churches in declarations of principle. The Boston situation was much helped by an inter-denominational meeting and a joint statement signed by Bishop Oxnham for the Massachusetts Council of Churches and by Cardinal O'Connell. Equally necessary is more concrete instruction in race relations for church children. Too often the beginning of trouble between Christian and Jewish children is the charge "The Jews killed our Christ." Facing this responsibility some 3000 ministers have signed the pledge of the Textbook Commission of "The Protestant" which says: *"Whatever deflects our own consciences from the penetrating glance of God by making a scapegoat of the Jews or any other race must be stricken from our teaching and our texts. . . . We pledge to do all in our power to effect such removal and to undo through our preaching and teaching the ill effects of previous false teaching."*

A WORLDWIDE ISSUE

Discrimination here merges into the worldwide question of white supremacy. Wendell Willkie brought it back with him from the Far East. Vice-President Wallace comes back from South America to tell us that the other half of the Americans of the New World who speak Spanish or Indian dialects are just as good Americans as we are. Pearl Buck, citing the bitter experience of the whites who had no Malaysians with them to defend Singapore, and those who refused to let the Chinese come across the Burma border to help them, warns: "The main barrier between East and West today is that the white man is not willing to give up his superiority and the colored man is no longer willing to endure his inferiority. . . . The man of Asia today is not a colonial and he has made up his mind that he will never be a colonial again." History has written the decision, equality of opportunity for all races or no peace for the world. And in February the South Carolina House of Representatives reaffirmed "our belief in and our allegiance to established white supremacy."

Our gospel proclaims equality of all men before God and the abundant life for all on equal terms. It is time to translate these principles into political, economic and cultural fact. From a German Protestant leader who learned it the hard way comes the warning: "If you stand by when other people lose their freedom you can be perfectly sure the day will come when you will lose your own." It is one cause, to be won only by standing together; the Jew for the Negro, the Negro for the Jew, the white Christian for both, against the doctrine and practice of white supremacy here and all over the world. "The abolition of racial exclusiveness is one of the war aims of the Soviet Union. The other allies had better adopt it. As the Soviets have shown in their multi-national state, the road to that goal is through continuous instruction of youth in the meaning of equality of rights for all races; the outlawing of any restriction of rights or establishment of privileges on account of race or nationality and of the advocacy of racial or national exclusiveness or hatred or contempt; *the provision of the equal economic opportunity that enables cultural development for all.*

SUMMARY OF SUGGESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

(Continued from April issue)

Willard Uphaus, Connecticut,—“Continue. Try to make the entire membership feel that the Federation is a movement that belongs to all, and not to one ‘line’, one person, or group of persons.”

E. Harold Mohn, Ohio,—“The only freedoms left are speech, worship, and the public expression of opinion. Continue an independent MFSS whose character and program command the attention and respect of Methodism and other Christian bodies. When it becomes ‘official’ its creative value ceases; it is no more than a ‘Gallup Poll’, the voice of a majority. Minorities only initiate progress.”

E. A. Morgan, Montana,—“Find some way to get ‘labor’ to support this movement. The Bulletin reaches the middle class of our churches, who have no other means of hearing ‘labor’s’ views.”

Louis E. Orcutt, New York,—“The Federation reached its highest acceptance, in the Church, when it operated as a fact finding and reporting organization. It began to lose influence when it adopted a near socialistic mast head and became a propaganda organization. Entrenched privilege resented it. Those proud of their ignorance resented its insistent call to knowledge. It is a normal procedure that it should lose much of its following. Most organizations of this kind do. With all this in mind I do not favor the continuance of the work of the Federation as a subordinate branch of any of our standard Boards. It would lose its Free Enterprise. It would be throttled by the necessity to conform. It might even wax fat on a guaranteed income.”

Elbert M. Parkhurst, New York,—“The MFSS has through a decade or more provided an indispensable element to my morale. In the almost continuous pressure of local church life toward uncritical conformity with newspaper-made dominant opinion, I have been saved from complete despair by the constant ‘Bulletin’ reminders that the MFSS crowd were not yet overcome by the world. There is need for an official General Conference Commission for Social Action to effectively educate and guide Methodism in the same way that the Council for Social Action leavens and leads the Congregational Christian Churches. There is need also of an interdenominational unofficial Federation for Social Service to nourish the spirits of ecumenical leaders for the united Christendom we hope for. . . . Concrete guidance is much needed. We need to be informed not only of issues, guided in discovering the most Christian solution, but also guided in relating ourselves to the persons in control of those issues.”

Harold H. Cramer, Massachusetts,—“Continue MFSS and organize the National Committee on a regional basis, asking each to secure pledges for a proportionate part of the necessary budget.”

Henry H. Crane, Michigan,—“Keep going. Now, more than ever MFSS is indispensable.”

Paul Davis, Georgia,—“Continue MFSS with increase in number of southern leaders, if an official social service commission of independent character cannot be established.”

William F. Davis, Jr., New York,—“A commission (unofficial), independent, is vital as a spear-head to all our social service action. To become official would dilute the influence of such a body. A commission with whose statements the entire church agrees would mean nothing. Bulletin is of great value in supplying us with information and bolstering our morale when we live in the midst of concentrated conservatism.”

Robert H. Dolliver, New York,—“I favor a Social Service Board including three commissions, Temperance, World Peace, and Social Action, each with an Executive Secretary, members of the Board to be nominated by the Board of Bishops and elected by the General Conference, 42 in number, one Bishop, three Ministers, and three laymen from each Jurisdiction.”

Allen D. Edwards, South Carolina,—“An official Federation patterned after Friends Social Service Committee, including Board of Temperance, Commission on Peace, etc. Might be less progressive but more effective in promoting objectives which it might adopt.”

Cloyd V. Gustafson, Missouri,—“Keep the Federation unofficial; absorption in a bureaucracy will kill it. There are many small groups for progressive education on socio-economic problems and action — denominational; quasi-religious; non-religious. Can not some of these groups pool their educational functions even if they must continue to act to some degree separately? The impact would surely be greater, and the overhead less.”

Elmer L. Harvey, Indiana,—“The MFSS can be supported if key men are selected in each Annual Conference to solicit annual dues. I will offer to help in the Indiana Conference. We should be able to double the support.”

Freeman A. Havighurst, Illinois,—“If justification for calling MFSS into being, present conditions indicate larger need and larger justification for continuance.”

W. C. Henn, Iowa,—“There is a victory for economic democracy to be won. The bitter opposition indicates that the heaviest battles are still ahead. God helping us we must do our utmost and win.”

C. C. P. Hiller, Massachusetts,—“MFSS has done more than we could have done as an agency of the Church Organization. Despite the very insignificant number of our members — when one considers the number of preachers and supposedly socially minded laymen — we have had an influence far beyond what our numbers would suggest. With the right leadership — and with financial backing adequate to the need — I would favor continuance as independent.”

Chester E. Hodgson, New Jersey,—“The function of the Federation is to fight for the rights of man and its opponents would welcome an opportunity to unite it with something and destroy its effectiveness. This we cannot allow.”

Betty Johns, Massachusetts,—“I think it would be tragic if within the Methodist Church we lost, because of the retirement or resignation of a few men, an organization which stands for the kind of concerns presented and worked on by the Federation for Social Service.”

Richard D. Jones, New Jersey,—“MFSS is essential. This is the one organization of the Church that talks the language of the worker.”

Charles B. Ketcham, Ohio,—“The value of the present form of organization lies in its freedom from official restraint and its promotion of ideas that are in advance of current practice. Its weakness stems from its failure to represent the whole church. Personally, I would prefer a commission more representative of the thought of the church, but not too bound by official timidity and restraint.”

Donald R. Lemkau, Illinois,—“Conditions today are very different from what they were when the Federation was formed. I favor formation of a Commission of Social Action, independent of any of the boards of the church — like the Commission on World Peace. In the present state of affairs, more could be accomplished through an official organization — if it had the support of enthusiastic individuals for special projects — than in any other way.”

James H. Link, New York,—“A division of social action and education under the Board of Education; — a program centered in grassroots education rather than specifically committed to one economic formula.”

Webster D. Melcher, New York,—“A Social Service Commission similar to the Peace Commission. Keep it out of Board of Education.”

Bruce L. Middaugh, Pennsylvania,—“Avoid following the Moscow ‘party line’. After all the pother we have made about war and peace through the years, as soon as the Communists were for war so was the MFSS.”

Walter R. Warner, Pennsylvania,—“An official social action commission whose aim shall be to educate the entire church by means of polls, forums, and conferences on Christian life and order.”

B. M. Watson, Iowa,—“The application of the Gospel to all of our social relationships will be the outstanding feature of Christianity in the next twenty-five years. The Church must have a sympathetic, helpful, cooperative, intelligent attitude toward the problems of the working class in all nations. Let us not make the mistake of the church in France, Russia, Spain and in South America.”

Bradford G. Webster, New York,—“We need a new name, new blood, new leadership from former Methodist South and Protestant. Let’s try the Christian tactic — dying or losing one’s life for the Gospel’s sake, and finding it more vital in another form.”

John Clark Williams, Ohio,—“Make the Federation an agency of Methodist service rather than the advocate of some wing of social belief. Make it a clearing house of social opinion. It should have some official status.”

Joseph F. Sefl, Illinois,—“To discontinue would be a tragedy and a reflection upon the Methodist ministry and Church.”

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